

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

REFRIGERATOR

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims the benefit of Korean Patent Application No. 2003-102155, filed on December 31, 2003, in the Korean Intellectual Property Office, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention relates to a refrigerator, and more particularly, to a refrigerator in which cooling air generated from an evaporating unit is supplied to a freezing compartment and a refrigerating compartment through a duct to keep a uniform temperature distribution in the refrigerator.

2. Description of the Related Art

[0003] A refrigerator keeps food fresh for a long time by using cooling air heat-exchanged from an evaporating unit of a freezing cycle.

[0004] The refrigerator includes a duct in communication with a freezing compartment and a refrigerating compartment to supply cooling air to and circulate the cooling air inside of the freezing compartment and a refrigerating compartment.

[0005] A conventional refrigerator includes a main body having a refrigerating compartment and a freezing compartment, a door provided on openings of the refrigerating compartment and the freezing compartment of the main body to open/close the openings, an evaporating unit provided in the main body, and first and second ducts in communication with the evaporating unit to guide cooling air to the refrigerating compartment and the freezing compartment of the main body, respectively. Recently, an independent refrigerating method in which an evaporating

unit is provided in each of the refrigerating compartment and a freezing compartment has been used to facilitate a refrigerating efficiency.

[0006] The conventional refrigerator has an advantage to facilitate the refrigerating efficiency, but a disadvantage of a high cost for two of the evaporating units. Further, the conventional refrigerator requires more space for two of the evaporating units, which increases a volume of the refrigerator and decreases a space to store food in the refrigerator.

[0007] On the other hand, in a refrigerator having only one evaporating unit, a duct to guide cooling air to the refrigerating compartment has been provided mainly on a rear or a side of the refrigerating compartment. Thus, cooling air is not supplied to an edge of the refrigerating compartment, which causes a difficulty to obtain a uniform temperature distribution. To solve the problem, a plurality of ducts is necessary.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] Accordingly, it is an aspect of the present invention to provide a refrigerator that comprises a simple structure of a duct and keeps a uniform temperature distribution in a refrigerating compartment.

[0009] Additional aspects and/or advantages of the invention will be set forth in part in the description which follows and, in part, will be obvious from the description, or may be learned by practice of the invention.

[0010] The foregoing and/or other aspects of the present invention are achieved by providing refrigerator comprising a main body comprising a freezing compartment and a refrigerating compartment, an evaporating unit in the main body, and a first duct and a second duct in communication with the evaporating unit to guide cooling air generated from the evaporating unit to the freezing compartment and the refrigerating compartment of the main body, respectively, wherein the second duct is provided around an edge of a rear of the refrigerating compartment of the main body and comprises a cooling air supply hole to supply the cooling air to the refrigerating compartment.

[0011] According to an aspect of the invention, the second duct further comprises a main duct which is provided at an upper part of the edge of the refrigerating compartment and to which the

cooling air is supplied from the evaporating unit, and side ducts in communication with the main duct and provided on opposite sides of the edge of the refrigerating compartment and having a side cooling air supply hole, respectively.

[0012] According to an aspect of the invention, the refrigerator further comprises a damper provided inside of the main duct.

[0013] According to an aspect of the invention, the main duct comprises a first cooling air channel and a second cooling air channel on an inside thereof, to guide the cooling air to the side ducts.

[0014] According to an aspect of the invention, the main duct further comprises a main cooling air supply hole at opposite sides of a front side thereof, and a third cooling air channel on the inside thereof, to guide the cooling air to the main cooling air supply hole.

[0015] According to an aspect of the invention, the refrigerator further comprises a lamp disposed on the main duct as a single body with the main duct.

[0016] According to an aspect of the invention, the side ducts extend to a lower part of the refrigerating compartment.

[0017] According to an aspect of the invention, the refrigerator further comprises a guide duct in communication with the evaporating unit to supply the cooling air to the first and second ducts.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0018] These and/or other aspects and advantages of the invention will become apparent and more readily appreciated from the following description of the embodiments, taken in conjunction with the accompany drawings of which:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a refrigerator according to an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is an exploded perspective view illustrating a second duct of the refrigerator shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a combined perspective view of the second duct as shown in FIG. 2;

FIG. 4 is a partial perspective view illustrating the second duct mounted in a refrigerating compartment of the refrigerator as shown in FIG. 1; and

FIG. 5 is a plane view illustrating a flow of cooling air supplied to the refrigerating compartment of the refrigerator as shown in FIG. 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0019] Reference will now be made in detail to the embodiments of the present invention, examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying drawings, wherein like reference numerals refer to the like elements throughout. The embodiments are described below to explain the present invention by referring to the figures.

[0020] In FIG. 1, a refrigerator according to an embodiment of the present invention comprises a main body 20 divided into a freezing compartment 22 and a refrigerating compartment 24 by partitions 23, doors 30a and 30b provided on openings of the freezing compartment 22 and the refrigerating compartment 24 to open/close the openings, an evaporating unit 40 provided in the main body 20, and first and second ducts 50 and 60 communicated with the evaporating unit 40, to guide cooling air to the freezing compartment 22 and the refrigerating compartment 24, respectively.

[0021] According to an aspect of the present invention, the main body 20 may be a "side by side" structure in which the freezing compartment 22 and the refrigerating compartment 24 are disposed at right and left sides. According to an aspect of the present invention, the doors 30a and 30b may be hingedly connected to the freezing compartment 22 and the refrigerating compartment 24 to rotatably open/close the openings of the freezing compartment 22 and the refrigerating compartment 24 as selected.

[0022] The evaporating unit 40 supplies cooling air to keep the freezing compartment 22 and the refrigerating compartment 24 at a predetermined temperature. The evaporating unit 40 is provided at a rear of the freezing compartment 22 to provide a wider space for storing food and connected to the first and second ducts 50 and 60. The evaporating unit 40 may be variously positioned as required.

[0023] The evaporating unit 40 comprises an evaporator (not shown) to generate cooling air by heat exchange, and a fan (not shown) provided in the vicinity of the evaporator to send the cooling air generated from the evaporator to the first and second ducts 50 and 60.

[0024] The first and second ducts 50 and 60 each comprise a cooling air channel, respectively, which guides the cooling air generated from the evaporating unit 40 to insides of the freezing compartment 22 and the refrigerating compartment 24. Especially, the second duct 60 is provided around an edge of a rear of the refrigerating compartment 24 to supply the cooling air from the edge of the rear of the refrigerating compartment 24 and comprises cooling air supply holes 66a and 66b in communication with the refrigerating compartment 24. Thus, a refrigerating efficiency of the refrigerating compartment 24 increases and a uniform temperature distribution is obtained.

[0025] In FIGS. 2 through 4, the second duct 60 of the refrigerator according to the embodiment of the present invention further comprises a main duct 62 which is provided on an upper part of the edge of the refrigerating compartment 24, and to which the cooling air is supplied from the evaporating unit 40, and side ducts 68 in communication with the main duct 62 and provided on sides of the edge of the refrigerating compartment 24 and having a plurality of side cooling air supply holes 66b.

[0026] The main duct 62 comprises a damper 70 to adjust the quantity of cooling air flowing into the refrigerating compartment 24. A variety of dampers may be used as selected. However, as an aspect of the present invention, an electromotive damper may be used. A detailed description of the electromotive damper is not provided, as it is a prior art.

[0027] The main duct 62 further comprises an upper cover 62a and a lower cover 62b, connected to each other to form first and second cooling air channels 63 and 64 to guide the cooling air to the side ducts 68. As an aspect of the present invention, the damper 70 may be provided at a position where the first and second cooling air channels 63 are not divided yet. The damper 70 may be variously positioned as long as the quantity of the cooling air supplied to the refrigerating compartment 24 can be adjusted.

[0028] The main duct 62 further comprises main cooling air supply holes 66a on opposite sides of a front side thereof, to supply the cooling air to an upper front of the refrigerating

compartment 24. The main duct 62 further comprises a third cooling air channel 65 on an inside thereof, to guide the cooling air to the main cooling air supply holes 66a.

[0029] The side ducts 68 are bar shaped and extend to a lower part of the refrigerating compartment 24 to rapidly cool the refrigerating compartment 24 and obtain a uniform temperature distribution. Shapes and sizes of the side ducts 68 may be varied as required, a structure and a position of the side cooling air supply hole 66b may be varied as well.

[0030] The main duct 62 further comprises a lamp 80 on a front surface thereof, to illuminate the refrigerating compartment 24 as a single body with the main duct 62, which saves space to dispose the lamp 80.

[0031] A guide duct 90 is disposed between the evaporating unit 40, the first duct 50 and the second duct 60 in communication with the evaporating unit 40, the first duct 50 and the second duct 60, to supply and distribute the cooling air generated from the evaporating unit 40 to the first and second units 50 and 60. The guide duct 90 comprises a connecting hole 92 on a side thereof, connected to the first duct 50. Like the main duct 62, the guide duct 90 comprises an upper cover 90a and a lower cover 90b, which are connected to each other to form a cooling air channel in communication with the main duct 62.

[0032] According to a configuration as described above, a description of a flow of the cooling air follows.

[0033] First, cooling air generated from the evaporating unit 40 passes the guide duct 90 to be guided to the first duct 50 and the second duct 60, respectively. The cooling air guided to a rear of the refrigerating compartment 24 through the guide duct 90 flows into the main duct 62 in communication with the guide duct 90.

[0034] The cooling air flowing into the main duct 62 is guided to the side duct 68 through the first and second cooling air channels 63 and 64 and at the same time to a front side of the main duct 62 through the third cooling air channel 65.

[0035] The cooling air guided to the side ducts 68 is supplied from the upper part of the rear edge of the refrigerating compartment 24 through the side cooling air supply hole 66b. The cooling air guided to the front side of the main duct 62 is supplied from the opposite sides of the

edge of the rear of the refrigerating compartment 24 through the main cooling air supply hole 66a, which keeps the temperature distribution in the refrigerating compartment 24 uniform.

[0036] As described above, according to the present invention, the cooling air is supplied from the edge of the rear of the refrigerating compartment, thereby providing the duct of a simple structure and facilitating a refrigerating efficiency.

[0037] Further, since only one evaporating unit is used in the refrigerator according to the present invention, cost for mounting the duct is decreased.

[0038] Although a few embodiments of the present invention have been shown and described, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that changes may be made in this embodiment without departing from the principles and spirit of the invention, the scope of which is defined in the claims and their equivalents.